

P 290942Z MAR 94
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7267
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001643

DEPT FOR EAP/TB, INR

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA'S ARMED FORCES PAT THEMSELVES ON THE
- BACK AND PROMOTE THE ARMY CINC

11. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: DESPITE UNUSUALLY INCLEMENT WEATHER, THE 49TH BURMOY WENT OFF WITHOUT INCIDENT ON MARCH 27. IN HIS HOLIDAY ADDRESS, SLORC CHAIRMAN THAN SHWE STRESSED THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN BURMESE NATION-BUILDING AND CALLED FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND STABILITY. WITHOUT PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ARMY CINC LTG MAUNG AYE WAS AWARDED HIS FOURTH STAR ON MARCH 21, THUS FIRING UP HIS FORMAL SUPERIOR RANKING TO POWERFUL INTELLIGENCE CZAR LTG KHIN NYUNT. END SUMMARY.

DON'T RAIN ON MY PARADE

13. THE MOST REMARKABLE ASPECT OF THE RITUAL MASS MARCH AND SPEECH BY THE DEFENSE SERVICES COMMANDER AND SLORC CHIEF, SENIOR GENERAL THAN SHWE, WAS THE UNSEASONAL SQUALL (THE FIRST IN 118 YEARS OF RECORD-KEEPING) THAT COINCIDED WITH THE EVENTS. SHOWING THEIR METTLE, NOT A SINGLE MEMBER OF THE SLORC FLINCHED FOR AN UMBRELLA; NEWSPAPER PHOTOS SHOW THE WHOLE SLORC LINEUP, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THAN SHWE, SOAKED TO THE SKIN. NOT SURPRISINGLY GIVEN THE STRENGTH OF SUPERSTITION HERE, THE FREAK WEATHER PROVED TO BE GRIST FOR THE MILLS OF THE MANY BURMESE LOOKING HERE FOR OMENS OF THE SLORC'S IMPENDING DEMISE.

14. IN A SHORT AND MINIMALLY POLEMICAL SPEECH, SENIOR GENERAL THAN SHWE CHARACTERIZED THE MILITARY'S MAIN TASK NOW AS CREATING CONDITIONS TO ENSURE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY EVEN AFTER POWER IS TRANSFERRED TO A NOMINALLY CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT (NO TIMEFRAME SPECIFIED). HE LAID SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON NATIONAL RECONCILIATION BUT SPOKE SPECIFICALLY ONLY OF THE NEED FOR A MEETING OF THE MINDS WITH ARMED INSURGENTS, NOT THE SLORC'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS. HE ALSO POINTED TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION AND THE NEW CONSTITUTION AS SERIOUS FACTORS IN BURMA'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. INTERESTINGLY, THOUGH THAN SHWE HIMSELF CLAIMED "THE NATION IS STRONG ONLY WHEN THE TATMADAW (ARMY) IS STRONG," THE GOVERNMENT RADIO COMMENTATOR REMINDED LISTENERS THAT THE MILITARY EXISTS FOR THE COUNTRY, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND. NOTE: WHETHER COINCIDENTAL OR NOT, THIS PHRASE WAS FREQUENTLY USED BY AUNG SAN SUU KYI DURING HER PRO-DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGNING.

15. (ORIGINAL TEXT MISSIN) ...WESTERN AMBASSADORS EITHER HAVING DISCREETLY LEFT TOWN FOR THE WEEKEND OR SIMPLY DECLINING OUTRIGHT THEIR INVITATION TO THE ARMED FORCES DAY BANQUET, THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR FOUND HIMSELF THE TEMPORARY DEAN OF THE LOCAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS. BESIDES OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, RUSSIA, YUGOSLAVIA AND ISRAEL ALL SENT DIPLOMATS TO THE DINNER, WHICH REPORTEDLY WAS OTHERWISE UNREMARKABLE.

ERADICATING HISTORY WITH A HISTORY MUSEUM

16. REGARDING OTHER ASPECTS OF THE ARMED FORCES DAY CELEBRATION, SEVERAL CONSPICUOUS PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS WERE SUCCESSFULLY RUSHED TO COMPLETION IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAY. THESE INCLUDED A DAM NEAR PROME, A MILITARY-SPONSORED BUDDHIST MONASTERY NEAR THE SHWEDAGON PAGODA, AND THE DEFENSE SERVICES MUSEUM. CONSTRUCTION OF THE MASSIVE NEW MUSEUM ENTAILED THE DEMOLITION OF THE COLONIAL-ERA JUBILEE HALL, THE SITE OF MANY IMPORTANT EVENTS IN BURMA'S POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY (INCLUDING AUNG SAN'S STATE FUNERAL). THE MUSEUM'S INITIAL EXHIBITION FOCUSES ON BURMESE MILITARY HISTORY (LESS HISTORIC THAN EXPECTED) AND THE WORK OF THE REGIONAL COMMANDS. INDICATIVE OF THE SEAMLESSNESS OF THE MILITARY/GOVERNMENT WEB HERE, EACH MINISTRY, WHETHER OR NOT HEADED BY A MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES, WAS DEVOTED TO ITS ACTIVITIES. PUBLIC ATTENDANCE HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN DISAPPOINTING.

A QUIET PROMOTION

17. TO DATE THE SLORC HAS NOT USED THE ARMED FORCES CELEBRATION TO ANNOUNCE PROMOTIONS. ACCORDINGLY, WITHOUT FANFARE, THE ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, LTG MAUNG AYE, WAS AWARDED HIS FOURTH STAR ON MARCH 21. SINCE THEN HE HAS BEEN LISTED SIMPLY AS "GENERAL," INCLUDING IN THE PORTRAIT PANTHEON MOUNTED IN THE ENTRANCE OF THE JUST OPENED DEFENSE SERVICES MUSEUM. GOB CONTACTS VIEW HIS PROMOTION AS SIMPLY ROUTINE, COMING AFTER THE TRADITIONAL YEAR'S WAIT IN THE FOUR STAR ARMY CINC BILLET. ALL THE SAME, MAUNG AYE NOW FORMALLY OUTRANKS KHIN NYUNT AND IS EVEN MORE THAN BEFORE THE OBVIOUS CHOICE TO SUCCEED THAN SHWE, SHOULD THE SLORC CHIEF CEDE THE REINS ANYTIME SOON.

HUDDLE